



U.S.-Mexico Border Region

EPA BORDER PROGRAMS FOCUS ON PUBLIC HEALTH

Health studies show that children in the U.S.-Mexico Border region are at greater risk of health problems than the average child living in either country. Since widespread poverty and pollution are two of the major reasons, EPA's border programs have a special focus on public health.

Asthma hospitalization rates for children living in highly agricultural **Imperial County, California** and **Mexicali, Mexico**, are two to three times higher than those for California as a whole. Last year, EPA awarded \$175,000 in grants for border community education on environmental hazards, asthma, and other respiratory illnesses.

In Nogales and Douglas, Arizona and Agua Prieta, Mexico, these grants fund community health care worker visits to the homes of asthmatic children, to educate families on environmental factors like dust and smoke that contribute to respiratory illnesses. Two other EPA grants are funding training for women residents of low-income

neighborhoods in **San Luis, Arizona**, and **San Luis Rio Colorado, its Mexican sister city**, to educate their neighbors on safe drinking water storage and garbage disposal practices. EPA awarded another grant to an Imperial County, California, community group to educate farm workers on how to prevent pesticide contamination of their homes and families. And EPA assistance with air monitoring and air emission reduction strategies is helping the Mexican government finalize clean air plans for **Mexicali** and **Tijuana-Rosarito**.

More information on EPA's U.S.-Mexico border programs is available on the Internet at www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder

FIFTY-FOUR CLEAN WATER PROJECTS UNDERWAY

Cooperative efforts are already paying off in the struggle for clean water in the border region. Fifty-four drinking water and wastewater infrastructure projects costing a total of \$922 million and serving over six million border residents, including 14

XIAMARA CASTRO



This power plant in Rosarito, Baja California Norte, has been a major source of air pollution in nearby Tijuana. EPA helped Mexican officials develop a clean air plan for the area. **Previous page:** Aerial view shows U.S.-Mexico Border along roadway, Tijuana to the left of roadway, International WasteWater Treatment Plant in center, and Pacific Ocean in distance. Photo: Aerial Fotobank, San Diego..

Indian tribes, are underway on both sides of the border. Among these are two wastewater treatment plants in Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Sonora, and an international interceptor to send sewage from both communities to the treatment plant in the U.S. Both countries are now working to prevent industrial toxic wastes from entering the sewer lines, since toxics can render treatment facilities useless.

In Tijuana, Baja California, binational work continues on a comprehensive water and wastewater master plan for the Tijuana area. Uncontrolled dry weather sewage flows from Mexico crossing into the U.S. have been greatly reduced, resulting in far fewer beach closures in the San Diego area, thanks to the International Wastewater Treatment Plant and South Bay outfall completed in 1998.

In Mexicali, construction of a wastewater collection system and treatment plants is underway. Water projects to serve the entire Mexicali Valley will be constructed over the next four years.

The U.S. and Mexico have also agreed to coordinate conservation policies and develop environmentally sus-



Map shows sister cities in the Border region. EPA works with local governments on both sides to foster binational cooperation to protect human health and the environment.

EPA's San Diego Border Office: Making A Difference



REBEKAH HOFFACKER

Clarice Gaylord at her desk in EPA's San Diego Border Office.

EPA's San Diego Border Office numbers only five full-time staff, but they have made a big difference, meeting thousands of residents along the U.S.-Mexico Border in the past few years, listening to their environmental concerns, and helping bring EPA's resources to bear to protect public health in this populous region. Clarice Gaylord, for example, joined EPA's San Diego Border Office in 1997, having completed a five-year stint

in Washington, D.C. as the first director of EPA's national environmental justice office.

During her San Diego assignment, Clarice worked to incorporate environmental justice goals into the EPA's U.S.-Mexico border programs, making efforts to include all affected people and groups as equal partners. She organized the border region's first Environmental Justice Roundtable. She met with tribal and rural residents as well as the people of urban communities in Yuma, San Luis, Nogales and San Diego. Thanks in part to Clarice's work, the EPA chose one such neighborhood, San Diego's Barrio Logan, for a public health pilot project (see story, p.28.).

Clarice worked with state and federal agencies, the community, and a local group, the Environmental Health Coalition, to plan cooperative efforts to protect the health of Barrio Logan residents. In 2001, she plans to retire after 30 years of government service, 18 of those years at EPA. 🌱

To learn more about the work of the EPA's San Diego Border Office, contact Dave Fege at (619) 235-4769, or fege.dave@epa.gov

tainable strategies for riparian forests and **wetlands of the Lower Colorado River and Delta.**

PROGRESS ON BORDER AIR QUALITY

Working cooperatively with Mexican government agencies, EPA used air monitoring data from the border cities of **Tijuana and Mexicali, Mexico** to help draw up clean air plans for these cities. The plans list pollution control measures to be carried out by local governments over the next five years. In the border sister cities of **Douglas, Arizona and Agua Prieta, Mexico**, EPA and local officials completed the first year of monitoring for airborne toxics and particulates. This data will lay the groundwork for future air quality plans for these cities.

INTERNATIONAL ENFORCEMENT ACTION SETS HAZARDOUS WASTE PRECEDENT

Ensuring that over 3,000 maquiladoras (foreign-owned factories) on the Mexican side of the border handle hazardous waste safely is a major priority for the EPA. Mexican law requires that hazardous wastes generated by maquiladoras are returned to the

raw materials' country of origin, but all waste shipments crossing the U.S. border must comply with U.S. regulations as well. As a result of close binational cooperation, EPA last year was able to conclude the **first-ever successful enforcement action against a facility in Mexico for violating a U.S. environmental law.**

Three facilities were cited in this case: Maquiladora Chambers de Mexico, S.A. de C.V. of Pitiquito, Sonora, and two American firms it did business with: Chambers Belt Co. of Phoenix, and Joffroy Customs Broker Inc. of Nogales, Arizona. Maquiladora Chambers, which had shipped hazardous waste into the U.S. without a manifest, paid a \$3,164 penalty, and agreed to train other maquiladora managers on U.S. and Mexican hazardous waste transport regulations. The two Arizona firms paid penalties of \$15,525 and \$25,344.

PREPAREDNESS FOR HAZARDOUS MATERIALS EMERGENCIES ALONG THE BORDER

EPA worked with U.S. and Mexican officials to develop mutual aid agreements for responding to chemical spills, fires, and other emergencies in the bor-



REBEKAH HOFFACKER

U.S. and Mexican officials from border sister cities at signing ceremony for mutual aid agreements on responding to chemical spills, fires, and other emergencies.

der sister cities of **San Luis and Nogales, Arizona, and San Luis and Nogales, Sonora, Mexico**. Mayors of the four cities signed the binational agreements in February and March 2000.

The mayors also formed Binational Emergency Planning Committees to keep the plans updated and periodically conduct hazardous materials emergency drills to give local agencies practice in responding cooperatively. Based on risks identified in the plans, EPA has provided emergency response training and equipment to local governments in both Arizona and Sonora.

EPA also initiated a California Border Area Emergency Planning and Response Task Force which regularly brings together federal, tribal, state, and local emergency response officials to share technical information, review hazardous materials incidents and resolve problems.

For details on these ongoing efforts, contact EPA's Lauren Volpini at (415)744-2333 or volpini.lauren@epa.gov

THE BARRIO LOGAN PILOT PROJECT

Last November, a federal interagency Environmental Justice Committee selected the low-income, predominantly Spanish-speaking **Barrio Logan community in San Diego** as one of 15 neighborhoods nationwide to get special assistance from the EPA in dealing with local pollution problems.

As part of the project, EPA's Indoor Air Tools-For-Schools kits are being used to identify indoor air pollu-

tion sources in schools, and EPA is funding the local chapter of the American Lung Association's teacher training for assisting children stricken by asthma attacks. The state Air Resources Board set up an air monitoring station in the community. And the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) has awarded a \$600,000 three-year grant to the USC Environmental Health Sciences Center, the non-profit Environmental Health Coalition and the Logan Heights Family Health Center to study the incidence of asthma in Barrio Logan's children and to assess air pollution sources. The **San Diego Air Pollution Control District** is also cooperating with EPA on these efforts.

Barrio Logan is an inner-city Latino neighborhood criss-crossed by two major freeways. The area is subject to the release of three million pounds of toxic air pollution each year from numerous small industries, large shipyards, and naval installations adjacent to the area.

"Cleaner air in Barrio Logan will not only improve the health of this community, but will make it a role model for similar communities throughout the United States," says EPA's Clarice Gaylord. "This is part of our commitment to protecting public health and the environment of this community."

For more information, contact EPA's San Diego Border Office at (619) 235-4767 or Diane Takvorian of the Environmental Health Coalition at (619) 235-0281, or go to www.epa.gov/region09/features/barriologan



S.C. DELANEY

The Barrio Logan pilot project includes a study of the incidence of asthma in the neighborhood's children, and assessment of air pollution sources.